DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 026 UD 023 609

AUTHOR Ammann, Richard
TITLE Transmitting Filipino-American Ethnolinguistic Patterns.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Council on Anthropology and Education and the American Anthropological Association (Chicago, Illinois, November, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Filipino Americans; Holistic Approach; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Language Attitudes; *Language Patterns; *Sociocultural Patterns
IDENTIFIERS *Culture Transmission; Ethnolinguistics; *Functional Perspective

ABSTRACT

Some answers to the question of why one cultural pattern is transmitted while another is not, and a consideration of the process of cultural transmission and acquisition, are provided in this examination of the cultural and linguistic situation of the Filipino American population of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area. The discussion is divided into three parts. First, patterns of cultural transmission within the Filipino American community, and their emphasis on social relationships rather than language, are described. Second, the value of a functional perspective, which considers the sociocultural relationships surrounding communication and which appears to provide the most thorough understanding of why some Filipino cultural patterns are transmitted while others (including language) are not, is considered. Finally, the effect of examining the process of cultural transmission and acquisition within the wider social context--i.e. in terms of (1) relative position of an ethnic group within the broader society, and (2) cultural transmission as a holistic approach--is considered. The value of this perspective when examining bilingual-bicultural situations, and its broader implications for studies of the relationship between language and culture, are touched on. (CMG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

JUN 1984

ED245026

TRANSMITTING FILIPINO-AMERICAN ETHNOLINGUISTIC PATTERNS

Richard Ammann
Behavioral Science Division
University of Wisconsin-Parkside

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Richard Ammann
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

UD023609

Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Council on Anthropology and Education and the American Anthropological Association
Chicago, Illinois, November, 1983

I wish to examine a what may seem to be a very basic question regarding cultural transmission and acquisition. Kimball characterizes the interactive aspect of cultural transmission as "...who teaches what to whom, how, where, and under what circumstances (1974:99)." Gearing and associates likewise list the emphases of the intrapsychic aspects of cultural transmission studies as "What is transmitted...Who transacts with whom.., [and] How do transactions proceed (1976:96-102)?" Asking one more question might lead us to a better understanding of the whole transmission and acquisition process. I suggest asking: "Why might one cultural pattern be transmitted, and while another one might not be?"

Some answers to this question, and a consideration of the process of cultural transmission and acquisition, are suggested by examining the cultural and linguistic situation of the Filipino-American population of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area. The discussion is divided into three parts. First, patterns of cultural transmission within the Milwaukee Filipino-American community are described. Second, the value of a functional perspective, which considers the sociocultural relationships surrounding communication, is considered. This appears to provide the most thorough understanding of why some Filipino cultural patterns are transmitted while others, including language, are not. Finally, the effect of examining the process of cultural transmission and acquisition within the wider social context is considered. This perspective appears quite valuable when examining bilingual-bicultural situations, and not just among Filipino-Americans in Milwaukee, and it has broader implications for studies of the relationship between language and culture.

Patterns of cultural transmission in the Milwaukee Filipino-American community

Gloria, a public school teacher, has been teaching her two elementary-school-aged sons a few Tagalog words, but the boys are unable to speak Tagalog with any proficiency. She hesitated teaching them any Tagalog while they were younger, she said, because she has seen the difficulties which Hispanic children have encountered when learning to communicate in English. She feels that these linguistic difficulties create barriers in socializing with non-Hispanic peers. Gloria had helped organize and teach Tagalog language classes for children in the Milwaukee Filipino-American community, but the program did not last very long. Attendance was very irregular, with a new group of children appearing each week. Gloria feels that these classes were very low priority for parents; violin lessons, for instance, seemed to have higher status.

Gloria's attitudes and practices, regarding instruction in or emphasis on Filipino languages, are commonly held in the Milwaukee community. Few, if any, parents have urged their children to maintain any fluency they might have had in a Filipino language before they came to the United States. Likewise, few encourage their children to learn Tagalog or to reply in Tagalog or another Filipino language when addressed in such a way.

At the same time, however, children are instructed to greet Filipino-American elders in a Filipino fashion, with Filipino address terms, but in English. These teenagers do <u>not</u> use such interaction orientations with American adults, but the patterns they <u>do</u> use with Americans contain a higher

degree of deference and other negative politeness markers than their American peers would use. One teenager stated:

> We're not used to calling grownups, even though they're American, by their first names, because it seems disrespectful to us.

In this manner the teenagers appear to be following the interaction patterns their parents use with Americans. Filipino-American adults commonly show a greater degree of deference to their American social superiors and to elders than an American speaker would deem necessary. Even direct requests by a superior do not lead to the acquisition of American patterns, as the following situation illustrates. This involved another Filipino-American school teacher.

> It's hard to make a change and not call somebody older than you are, or higher up [in status] than you are, in a respectful way. I am always using "sir" when I talk to my school principal. One day he told me to start calling him by his first name. I answered, "Yes, sir."

Younger Filipino-American adults appear to use American speech patterns more readily than their elders, but the process is still a very deliberate and often uneasy one, as the following explanation from a newly-emigrated Filipina, back at college to get American professional certification, related:

> The other students in one of my college classes call the instructor by her first name, so I have followed suit. At first I felt a little uncomfortable about this, but now I'm feeling better about it, knowing that others do it, too.

Most Filipino-American immigrants arrive in the United States with fluency in Filipino English, so language does not pose a barrier to them. But even those who do switch from Filipino to American English maintain their Filipino orientation to social interaction. Furthermore, they purposefully transmit this orientation to their children. The children appear to realize the importance of this view to their parents and Filipino-American elders, and the children often make a special effort to learn how to address Filipino-Americans they might meet. One mother related the following:

> We were planning a trip to visit relatives in California last summer. The children were going to meet some of them for the first time. They were asking me how they should address these relatives. I didn't realize how important this was to my children.

Above all else, Filipino-American parents want their children to fit in to American society. They encourage their children to master English rather than Tagalog or another Filipino language. They even take pride in the way their children can engage in thoughtful and often argumentative discussions, something from which their Filipino peers would be discouraged except in academic surroundings. Still, parents strongly stress a Filipino orientation to social relationships.

I would argue that the focus of Filipino-American cultural transmission and acquisition is not upon language, but rather social relationships, the cultural patterns which in turn affect language and speaking patterns and

practices. This perspective offers the best explanation for the "Why" questions I have posed in this paper, in terms of my Filipino-American studies.

Value of a functional perspective

Thus, a functional orientation makes or provides the most understanding of the Filipino-American cultural transmission and acquisition process. The choices in forms of language or other cultural behaviors or patterns which are transmitted or acquired appear to be explained best by examining their cultural functions.

Such an orientation is not unique. Hymes stresses that linguistics must be "socially constituted,...concerned with social as well as referential meaning, and with language as part of communicative conduct and social action (1973:316)." I would argue that the same perspective can add to an understanding of cultural transmission: asking the question why a pattern is being transmitted or acquired and looking toward social or human relations for the answer appears to be beneficial.

Others have reinforced the usefulness of such a perspective. Mary Douglas, for example, argues that "The control [of thought] is not in the speech forms but in the set of human relations which generate thought and speech (1972:312)." Basil Bernstein argues that "fashions of speaking...induce in their speakers different ways of relating to objects and persons (1971:123)," and that these fashions of speaking are consequences of social structure and the patterns of social relationships within it. Halliday, building on the work of Bernstein, points out that language and speaking patterns and meanings "emerge more or less strongly, in particular contexts, especially those relating to the socialization of the child in the family (1978:25)." He continues, "This dependence on social structure is not merely unavoidable, it is essential to the child's development; he can develop only as social man, and therefore his experience must be shaped in ways which make him a member of society and his particular section of it (1978:26)."

Others have argued differently. Some have viewed language as the central determinant in cultural transmission and assimilation. This position can be characterized by Ricardo Rodriguez' argument in Hunger of Memory: when his parents were encouraged by school personnel to stress English in the home so that the children could succeed better in school, the family switched its cultural orientation as well. He is essentially arguing for a linguistic determinism view of language and culture: the use or choice of language determines the cultural orientation and emphasis on transmission and acquisiton. This perspective is most strongly associated with the work of Whorf and has been reinforced more recently by others as well as Rodriguez. McQuown, for instance, has stated:

> Language is that part of culture which serves as a vehicle for the transmission of other cultural patterns, both to its bearers and to the cultural anthropoligist who is studying it (1971:73).

Others have stressed that schools and education have a significant impact on cultural transmission and assimilation, but they do not train for all the

social relationships an individual is likely to encounter. Spindler, for example has stated that

> one of the most important aspects of modernization is the development of schools that...prepare young people to take their places in a very different kind of world than the one their parents grew up in (1974:302).

This is accurate, but these young people will still be relating to their parents and other relatives for many years. These will most likely continue to be different from the ways in which they relate to the rest of the world.

Considering the wider social context

Relative positions within the broader society also affect social relations and consequently cultural transmission. Minority status within a society can produce various limitations. Ogbu (1978), for instance, discriminates between castelike and immigrant minorities, those with and without socially restrictive job ceilings. Milwaukee Filipino-Americans appear to encourage their children to acquire, and fit in to mainstream American culture, because the socio-economic gains will offset any losses of Filipino cultural patterns. The job ceilings they will face are so high that they do not in actuality hinder achievement of socioeconomic goals. Furthermore, socioeconomic goals for the family were the main reason for most Filipino-Americans to migrate to the United States.

The position of Filipino-Americans in the larger society of the Milwaukee area encourages rather than discourages assimilation of American social and cultural patterns. The community is comprised of no more than a couple hundred families, most of whom live in middle or upper middle class white-dominated suburbs. An ethnic enclave does not exist.

Their presence is not seen as a threat but usually as a positive addition to the community. Filipino-Americans have always identified with white majority society and culture, even when they were not allowed to, as was true in the 1920s and 1930s on the West Coast and in other urban areas such as Chicago. In some ways their joking boasts of out-Americanizing their American neighbors is accurate. Well-paid physicians may have "sidelines," or part-time economic activities, to supplement their family's income and reduce their income tax payments. They appreciate large, well-decorated homes, expensive cars, and stylish clothing. They definitely want to participate in the American dream of comfortable suburban living.

At the same time, many Filipino cultural patterns continue to be maintained and transmitted by individuals, families, and the community. Food, for example, remains probably the most visible symbol of Filipino culture. Families continue to stress rice rather than bread or potatoes as their major carbohydrate. Social occasions typically have a lavish assortment of Filipino recipes to enjoy. In the realm of interpersonal relations, Filipino forms of greeting and address symbolize a Filipino ethnic orientation and identity. Child rearing, particularly regarding adolescent girls, is particularly strict, since it tends to follow Filipino rather than American norms for male-female relations in dating and courtship. A Filipino respect for age also permeates the community's relationships.

At this point another notion regarding cultural transmission should be considered: the widely-held assumption that cultural transmission is a holistic process. Gearing and Tindall, for example, stress that the encounters surrounding cultural transmissions "form a network (1973:96)." Spindler describes a process of "instrumental linkages (1974:300)," particularly in relation to the intra-psychic or receiver's aspect of cultural transmission. He has also stated:

> Children seem to acquire the culture of their community best when there is consistent reinforcement of the same norms of action and thinking through many different channels of activity and interaction (1974:300).

This assumption can assist in determining answers to the questions I am posing. Filipino-Americans might be perceived as utilizing two world views or cultural orientations, but an examination of the Filipino cultural patterns which are transmitted indicates that those patterns actually do not greatly conflict with American mainstream cultural patterns. Indeed, many would be seen quite favorably or positively by Americans, such as respect and deference for age.

How well do individuals function in a bicultural manner, and without a bilingual orientation or abilities? How do they react to, or manipulate, two world views, or what Kimball calls "canons of discrimination (1974:158)?" Filipino-Americans appear to function quite readily with switches in orientation. Young people appear to view the different orientations as a function of the situation and whom they are with. Their families are urging them to succeed in American ways yet interact with other Filipino-Americans in a Filipino way. Fitting in seems to be the most important goal.

For adult Filipino-Americans raised in the United States, cultural orientation can be more a matter of choice, and one which appears to develop after they have left home and have first felt more personally comfortable within American society. They then turn back to discovering more of their other ethnic background, and become more interested in functioning within its canons as well as those of the majority society and culture.

In God Emperor of Dune, the Bene Gesserit ask Leto how their religious community can be preserved. He replies, "...the secret of community lies in suppression of the incompatible (Herbert 1981:172)." Bicultural communities such as the Filipino-Americans of Milwaukee may eventually find that incompatabilities will disappear, but for the present, members of the community seem to be able to function with two cultural orientations, particularly when the orientations are not highly contradictory. They may choose one over another, depending on their goals or the present situation, and they may switch back and forth between orientations or world views much as bilingual individuals switch from speaking one language or another. An analytical perspective which examines how cultural transmission and acquisition function within social relations and other sociocultural patterns, and addresses the "Why" questions regarding what is transmitted or acquired, appears to be of value in understanding the process of cultural preservation and change as entailed in the transmission and acquisition process.

References

Bernstein, Basil.
1971 Class, Codes, and Control. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Douglas, Mary
1972 Speech, Class, and Basil Bernstein. London: The Listener 2241 (9 March).

Gearing, Frederick O.
1979 A Cultural Theory of Education. In Toward a Cultural Theory of Education and Schooling. F. O. Gearing, L. Sangree, eds. The Hague: Mouton.

Gearing, F. O. and Tindall, B. A.
1973 Anthropological Studies of the Educational Process. Annual Review of Anthropology 2:95-105.

Halliday, M. A. K.
1978 Language as Social Semiotic. Baltimore: University Park Press.

Herbert, Frank
1981 God Emperor of Dune. New York: Putnam.

Hymes, Dell
1973 The Scope of Sociolinguistics. In Report of the 23d Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Studies. R. W. Shuy, ed. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Kimball, Saul T.
1974 Culture and the Educative Process. New York: Teachers College Press.

McQuown, Norman A.
1982 Language, Culture, and Education: Essays by Norman A. McQuown (Selected and Introduced by Anwar S. Dil). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ogbu, John
1978 Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective. New York: Academic Press

Rodriguez, R.
1982 Hunger of Memory. Boston: Godine.

Spindler, G.
1974 Education and Cultural Process. New York: Holt, Rinehart.